



1 IN 100 WOMEN

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Media contacts: Kimberli Meadows, 301-918-3747, kmeadows@efa.org

One in every one hundred members of your audience has epilepsy. In fact, one in every one hundred Americans has epilepsy, so many of your readers who *don't* have epilepsy have children who have it, or they or their children have friends who have it. More than 3 million Americans have it, while 200,000 new cases of it are diagnosed each year, without regard to race, religion or ethnicity. What this means is that epilepsy is an issue for most of your readership, and epilepsy is an increasingly hot and relevant topic in today's media.

From the California girl who had to leave two schools after being cyber-bullied because she had seizures to the woman who developed epilepsy as a result of her pregnancy, women young, old and in-between are susceptible to epilepsy and seizure disorders, just like everyone else. But, even more than that, women with epilepsy face epilepsy-related reproductive difficulties throughout their lives, including increased rates of sexual dysfunction, infertility and seizures related to the menstrual cycle. Despite risks, successful pregnancy *is* possible, but often inappropriately discouraged by health care providers.

Your readers, and those women with epilepsy that your readers know and care about, need to know this important information. We've even heard from fathers of women with epilepsy who wish their daughters had known more earlier with regard to pregnancy and epilepsy.

"Having Another Child Might Kill Me."

When Liz Wood was nine months and six days pregnant, she was declared dead because her heart stopped. Paramedics told her mother they'd try to save her unborn son, but weren't sure if they could save *her*. Thankfully, they were able to save *Liz and* the baby. That was 7 years ago, when Liz developed pregnancy-related epilepsy and had a grand mal seizure.

She's had epilepsy ever since. "I think it's obvious that my pregnancy brought on my epilepsy," she said, noting that she's more likely to have seizures around the time of her period than at any other time, proving that her epilepsy is tied to hormones.

And now that she's just gotten married and become Liz Weas, at least once a week she thinks that she'd like to have another child, but worries that this time, it might really kill her. "Now, I want a baby more than ever before, but I just can't risk it."

Traumatic Brain Injuries: Not Just for Soldiers in Iraq

In 1995, Denise Pease, a successful African American businesswoman, was in a taxi that was hit by a van. She suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) during the accident. TBIs are the signature wound of the current war, and are leaving vast numbers of our troops with life-altering consequences. Just like Pease, many of them will develop epilepsy.

Pease, an assistant comptroller for New York City, experienced lost periods of time, increasing confusion and cognitive problems following the accident. She found herself unable to read, write or speak. It took years of therapy and the right medication for her to regain her life.

"This woman who dealt with the titans of industry was unable to make change at the corner store," Pease said at the recent Curing Epilepsy 2007 Conference, which was sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

It's All in Your Head

Elizabeth Goldberg, 23, started having episodes of dizziness and uncontrollable blinking when she was 10. Pediatricians thought she was faking it while a neurologist decided it was all in her head. The episodes escalated until she was falling down and hurting herself—not once or twice a day, but up to 20 times a day.

It was a full year-and-a-half later before a physician diagnosed her with epilepsy and put her on Tegretol. “It was like a new beginning,” Goldberg says.

But when she was 15, a doctor told her she couldn't be on Tegretol if she wanted children. She couldn't believe she was being forced to consider such adult matters at such a young age. And then came college, job searching and adult life—all while still experiencing seizures and how others perceive her as a person with epilepsy. She learned the tough reality that regardless of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other such protections the stigma associated with the condition is ever-present.

Who Am I? A Story of Devastation... and the Strength of Woman

In 1948, Mary Donovan Dymack got Scarlet Fever when she was just 2. That illness led to her lifelong battle with epilepsy. She went to various schools in her youth, getting kicked out of each in turn because she was different, until eventually she had to be home-schooled.

Then, when she was an adult, nobody would hire her. A native New Yorker, she appealed to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to help her. Regardless of the letters she and Rockefeller exchanged, she was left again devastated. Her brother finally convinced her to start her own business, crocheting, knitting and jewelry-making.

She's seen more than 200 doctors in her life—some of which didn't think she had any problems, some of which just wanted her to see a psychiatrist. She's tried just about every medicine available as well as alternative therapies involving vitamins and other programs, all to no avail.

She wasn't properly diagnosed with epilepsy until 1982, when a gastroenterologist sent her to a neurologist. In 1986, she had her first MRI. And in 1991, she had brain surgery, which left her unable to remember her family, friends, or even her own name.

Things got better after that. After all, one of the hospital drivers who helped her after the surgery became her husband. She *does* remember *his* name.

LIZ, DENISE, ELIZABETH AND/OR MARY, ALONG WITH THE COUNTRY'S LEADING EPILEPSY PHYSICIANS, ARE AVAILABLE TO DISPEL MYTHS AND SHED LIGHT ON THE ISSUES OF WOMEN AND EPILEPSY WITH YOUR AUDIENCE.